IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA

KEYA GOLDMAN 2216 N. Hobart Street Philadelphia, PA 19131

CIVIL ACTION

Plaintiff,

NO.

v.

JURY TRIAL DEMANDED

PHILADELPHIA GAS WORKS 800 W. Montgomery Avenue Philadelphia, PA 19122

Defendant.

CIVIL ACTION COMPLAINT

Plaintiff, Keya Goldman (hereinafter referred to as "Plaintiff" unless otherwise indicated), by and through her undersigned counsel, hereby avers as follows:

I. Introduction

1. Plaintiff has initiated this action to redress violations by Defendant of the Family and Medical Leave Act ("FMLA" - 29 U.S.C. §§ 2601 *et. seq.*). Plaintiff was unlawfully terminated as a result of her FMLA protected leave, usage and/or exercise of FMLA rights.

II. Jurisdiction and Venue

2. This Court may properly maintain jurisdiction over Defendant because Defendant's contacts with this state and this judicial district are sufficient for the exercise of jurisdiction over Defendant to comply with traditional notions of fair play and substantial justice, satisfying the standard set forth by the United States Supreme Court in <u>International Shoe Co v. State of Washington</u>, 326 U.S. 310 (1945) and its progeny.

- 3. This action is initiated pursuant to a federal law. The United States District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania has original subject matter jurisdiction over this action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1331 because the claims arise under the laws of the United States.
- 4. Venue is properly laid in this District pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1391(b)(1) and (b)(2), because Defendant resides in and/or conduct business in this judicial district and because a substantial part of the acts and/or omissions giving rise to the claims set forth herein occurred in this judicial district.

III. Parties

- 5. The averment of the foregoing paragraph is hereby incorporated by reference as if set forth fully herein.
 - 6. Plaintiff is an adult individual residing at the above-captioned address.
- 7. Philadelphia Gas Works ("PGW" or "Defendant"), is a municipally owned gas company operating in Pennsylvania with a principal place of business at the above-captioned address.
- 8. At all times relevant herein, Defendant acted by and through its agents, servants, and employees, each of whom acted at all times relevant herein in the course and scope of their employment with and for Defendant.

IV. Factual Background

9. The averments of the foregoing paragraphs are hereby incorporated by reference as if set forth fully herein.

- 10. Plaintiff was employed with Defendant for approximately five (5) years until her abrupt termination in December of 2019 (discussed i*nfra*), and Plaintiff exclusively worked for Defendant in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
- 11. Plaintiff (as of termination) was deemed based at Defendant's 5230 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania location (District Office). And she was employed as a Utility Customer Service Representative.
- 12. While employed with Defendant, Plaintiff suffered from significant back problems and sciatica, among other health complications (hereinafter "serious health conditions").
- 13. As a result of Plaintiff's serious health conditions, Plaintiff requested, was approved for, and utilized leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act ("FMLA") on an intermittent basis. Defendant thus agreed Plaintiff at all relevant times: (a) qualified for FMLA; and (b) hence had serious health conditions as defined by the FMLA. Plaintiff's entitlement to FMLA leave was never in dispute during her employment.
- 14. The (yet uncorrected) problem is that Defendant has exhibited one of the worst administrations of FMLA leave for employees in the greater Philadelphia area. In particular:
 - (A) Defendant has been sued numerous times for mishandling FMLA of employees;
 - (B) Defendant incorrectly handles FMLA paperwork on a pervasive basis;
 - (C) Defendant inaccurately counts or calculates FMLA usage on a pervasive basis;
 - (D) Defendant fails to follow written notice obligations to employees under the FMLA on a pervasive basis; and
 - (E) Defendant uses FMLA usage as a factor in taking adverse actions against employees.

- 15. Defendants ongoing mishandling of FMLA for many years on such a continual basis is illustrative of gross reckless indifference, intent, and a knowing failure to educate or remedy its improper FMLA administration prejudicing employees. During the course of the case, Plaintiff will demonstrate willfulness through continual FMLA violations over the span of many years (in addition to significant other evidence specific to Plaintiff).
- 16. Plaintiff had been generally supervised by Lamonda Burke ("Burke"), a supervisor of Customer Service and part-time security guard at a cookie store. Burke lacked any meaningful understanding or training in FMLA administration, as is customary with Defendants' administration.
- 17. Plaintiff last used intermittent FMLA when she was cleared by her physician to return to work "on 11/23/19 under no restrictions." Plaintiff provided Defendant with such medical documentation as well, as she appropriately kept Defendant apprised of her FMLA needs and medical absenteeism. Such absences to Plaintiff's knowledge were counted as FMLA qualifying (through and including up to November 23, 2019).
- 18. On or about December 6, 2019, Plaintiff was informed of her termination by Defendant. Plaintiff's termination came as a complete surprise to her, and Plaintiff was informed that her termination was due to her missing an extra day beyond her 12 weeks of federally-protected FMLA leave.
- 19. Plaintiff had not missed any time from work between November 23, 2019 and December 6, 2019, a period of 2 weeks following what she understood to be her then most recent approved FMLA days.

- 20. In early December 2019, in conjunction with contesting and questioning her termination:
 - (A) Plaintiff explained that she had absolutely no notice that she could have or would have used all of her FMLA, let alone face termination for missing an extra day beyond her FMLA period; and
 - (B) Defendant contended that Burke discussed *verbally* with Plaintiff her time missed in mid-November of 2020, which <u>was not true</u>. Burke was at times frustrated with Plaintiff's FMLA usage, and several times in Plaintiff's last year of employment merely told Plaintiff you miss a lot of time, you better watch it (and variations of such comments). This was animosity towards Plaintiff's FMLA usage, and it certainly was not notice of Plaintiff's actual FMLA usage or time remaining.
- 21. Plaintiff was never informed verbally <u>or</u> in writing leading up to her termination:

 (a) that she could face termination for missing a single day beyond her FMLA protected 12-week period; (b) that she had used any specific amount of FMLA days; (c) that she had any specific amount of FMLA days left to use; or (d) any other details of her FMLA status, designations or identifiable consequences. It is federally required that an employer update an employee in writing to avoid illegal terminations, such as occurring with Plaintiff.
- 22. In fact, Defendants literal excuse for the abrupt termination of Plaintiff makes no sense, as Burke was not even responsible for overseeing attendance, was not a participant in managing attendance, and did not handle FMLA administration within Defendant (a role generally performed by a designated person Renee Nelson). And Nelson <u>certainly did not</u> communicate any FMLA details to Plaintiff leading up to Plaintiff's termination from employment.
- 23. There are exact regulations within the FMLA to prevent Defendant's illegal termination of Plaintiff. In particular and only by way of example, CFR § 825.300(d)(6) requires:
 - (A) "The employer must notify the employee of the amount of leave counted against the employee's FMLA leave entitlement;"

- (B) Where intermittent leave is used, "the employer must provide notice of the amount of leave counted against the employee's FMLA entitlement" but not more often than once in a 30-day period; and
- (C) If an employer chooses to give "oral" notice, <u>it "shall be confirmed in writing</u>" thereafter.
- 24. CFR § 825.300(e), anticipating the very violations of Defendant, states:
 - (e) Consequences of failing to provide notice. Failure to follow the notice requirements set forth in this section may constitute an interference with, restraint, or denial of the exercise of an employee's FMLA rights. An employer may be liable for compensation and benefits lost by reason of the violation, for other actual monetary losses sustained as a direct result of the violation, and for appropriate equitable or other relief, including employment, reinstatement, promotion, or any other relief tailored to the harm suffered See § 825.400(c).

CFR § 825.300(e)

- 25. Had Plaintiff been informed and updated in writing with any status of FMLA usage, she could have planned accordingly. In other words, Plaintiff physically would have worked in pain if need be to avoid losing her job (or scheduled appointments at different times / dates) if she were ever informed she (allegedly) exhausted her FMLA entitlement. This is clear prejudice and interreference with Plaintiff's FMLA entitlements and substantive rights.¹
- 26. Moreover, it is legally prohibited to take into consideration that a Plaintiff's use of federally-protected FMLA leave. Thus, if such FMLA leave is removed from the equation, Plaintiff was in essence terminated for missing a day from work. Employees without FMLA, miss 1 day, weeks, or months from work at varying times and under different circumstances without facing termination. Thus, Plaintiff was retaliated against

¹ Upon information and belief, Defendants also did not even correctly count Plaintiff's FMLA leave properly.

in violation of the FMLA by Defendant's considering her prior FMLA usage as a basis to terminate her as if it were some additional unexcused absenteeism.

27. Plaintiff's termination from her employment constitutes clear interference, discrimination, and retaliation violations of the FMLA.

Count I <u>Violations of the Family and Medical Leave Act ("FMLA")</u> (Interference & Retaliation) - Against All Defendants -

- 28. The foregoing paragraphs are incorporated herein in their entirety as if set forth in full.
- 29. Plaintiff was an eligible employee under the definitional terms of the FMLA, 29 U.S.C. § 2611(a)(i)(ii).
- 30. Plaintiff met all FMLA eligibility requirements from 2018-2019, and Plaintiff exercised her rights to use intermittent FMLA leave for herself (at issue, during calendar year 2019).
- 31. Plaintiff was terminated unlawfully as outlined throughout this Complaint, and these actions as stated herein constitute interference, discrimination, and retaliation violations of the FMLA.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff prays that this Court enter an Order providing that:

A. Defendant is to compensate Plaintiff, reimburse Plaintiff and make Plaintiff whole for any and all pay and benefits Plaintiff would have received had it not been for Defendant's illegal actions, including but not limited to past lost earnings, future lost earnings, salary, pay increases, bonuses, medical and other benefits, training, promotions, pension, and seniority. Plaintiff should be accorded those benefits illegally withheld from the date she first suffered

retaliation/interference at the hands of Defendant until the date of verdict;

B. Plaintiff is to be awarded liquidated damages, as permitted by applicable law, in an

amount determined by the Court or trier of fact to be appropriate to punish Defendant for its willful,

deliberate, malicious and outrageous conduct and to deter Defendant or other employers from

engaging in such misconduct in the future;

C. Plaintiff is to be awarded all applicable legal or equitable relief and the costs and

expenses of this action, and reasonable legal fees as provided by applicable federal and state law;

D. Any verdict in favor of Plaintiff is to be molded by the Court to maximize the

financial recovery available to the Plaintiff in light of the caps on certain damages set forth in

applicable federal law; and

E. Plaintiff's claims are to receive trial by jury to the extent allowed by applicable law.

Plaintiff has also endorsed this demand on the caption of this Complaint in accordance with Federal

Rule of Civil Procedure 38(b).

Respectfully submitted,

KARPF, KARPF, & CERUTTI, P.C.

By:____

Ari R. Karpf

3331 Street Road

Two Greenwood Square

Suite 128

Bensalem, PA 19020

(215) 639-0801

Date: January 6, 2021

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IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA

CASE MANAGEMENT TRACK DESIGNATION FORM

Keya Goldmar	ı ;	:	CIVIL ACTION	•			
.v.		:					
Philadelphia Ga	s Works	;	NO.				
plaintiff shall complete a Car filing the complaint and serve side of this form.) In the e designation, that defendant s	se Manageme e a copy on all event that a d shall, with its ties, a Case N	ent Track Des I defendants. lefendant doe first appeara Management	ay Reduction Plan of this court, counse ignation Form in all civil cases at the tim (See § 1:03 of the plan set forth on the revs not agree with the plaintiff regarding ace, submit to the clerk of court and serv Track Designation Form specifying the triggned.	ne of erse said			
SELECT ONE OF THE FO	DLLOWING	CASE MAN	NAGEMENT TRACKS:				
(a) Habeas Corpus - Cases brought under 28 U.S.C. § 2241 through § 2255.							
(b) Social Security - Cases r and Human Services den	equesting rev	view of a deci f Social Secur	ision of the Secretary of Health rity Benefits.	()			
(c) Arbitration - Cases required to be designated for arbitration under Local Civil Rule 53.2							
(d) Asbestos – Cases involvi exposure to asbestos.	ing claims for	r personal inj	ury or property damage from	()			
(e) Special Management – Commonly referred to as the court. (See reverse s	complex and	l that need spe	racks (a) through (d) that are ecial or intense management by led explanation of special				
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(f) Standard Management - Cases that do not fall into any one of the other tracks.							
1/6/2021	4	}	Plaintiff				
Date	Attorne	ey-at-law	Attorney for	Menteriological designation of the least tenth of t			
(215) 639-0801	(215) 639	1-4970	akarpf@karpf-law.com				
Telephone	FAX N	umber	E-Mail Address				

(Civ. 660) 10/02

Case 2:21-cv-00048-PATED SEATES DISTRICTION 06/21 Page 10 of 11 FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA

DESIGNATION FORM

(to be used by counsel or pro se plaintiff to indicate the category of the case for the purpose of assignment to the appropriate calendar)

ddress of Plaintiff: 2216 N. Hobart Street, Philadelphia, PA 19131								
Address of Defendant: _800 W. Montgomery Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19122								
Place of Accident, Incident or Transaction: Defendant's place of business								
ELATED CASE, IF ANY:								
ase Number: Judge: Date Terminated:	_							
Civil cases are deemed related when Yes is answered to any of the following questions:								
Is this case related to property included in an earlier numbered suit pending or within one year Yes No X								
2. Does this case involve the same issue of fact or grow out of the same transaction as a prior suit Yes No X								
3. Does this case involve the validity or infringement of a patent already in suit or any earlier numbered case pending or within one year previously terminated action of this court?								
4. Is this case a second or successive habeas corpus, social security appeal, or pro se civil rights Yes No X								
I certify that, to my knowledge, the within case is / is not related to any case now pending or within one year previously terminated action in this court except as noted above.								
ATE: 1/6/2021 ARK2484 / 91538	-							
Attorney-at-Law / Pro Se Plaintiff Attorney I.D. # (if applicable)								
IVIL: (Place a $$ in one category only)								
Federal Question Cases: B. Diversity Jurisdiction Cases:								
1. Indemnity Contract, Marine Contract, and All Other Contracts □ 1. Insurance Contract and Other Contracts 2. FELA □ 2. Airplane Personal Injury 3. Jones Act-Personal Injury □ 3. Assault, Defamation 4. Antitrust □ 4. Marine Personal Injury 5. Patent □ 5. Motor Vehicle Personal Injury 6. Labor-Management Relations □ 6. Other Personal Injury (Please specify): □ 7. Products Liability 7. Civil Rights □ 7. Products Liability – Asbestos 9. Securities Act(s) Cases □ 9. All other Diversity Cases 10. Social Security Review Cases □ 9. All other Diversity Cases 11. Insurance Contract and Other Contracts 2. Airplane Personal Injury 3. Assault, Defamation 4. Marine Personal Injury 5. Motor Vehicle Personal Injury 6. Other Personal Injury (Please specify): □ 7. Products Liability – Asbestos 9. All other Diversity Cases (Please specify): □								
ARBITRATION CERTIFICATION								
(The effect of this certification is to remove the case from eligibility for arbitration.) 1. Ari R. Karpf . counsel of record or pro se plaintiff, do hereby certify:								
I, Art R. Karpt , counsel of record <i>or</i> pro se plaintiff, do hereby certify: X Pursuant to Local Civil Rule 53.2, § 3(c) (2), that to the best of my knowledge and belief, the damages recoverable in this civil action case exceed the sum of \$150,000.00 exclusive of interest and costs: Relief other than monetary damages is sought.								
ATE: 1/6/2021 ARK2484 / 91538	_							
Attorney-at-Law / Pro Se Plaintiff Attorney 1.D. # (if applicable)								

Case 2:21-cv-00048-PD_Document 1_Filed 01/06/21 Page 11 of 11 CIVIL COVER SHEET

provided by local rules of court purpose of initiating the civil do	This form, approved by the Jucket sheet. (SEE INSTRUCTION	ndicial Conference of the NS ON NEXT PAGE OF T	he United States in September 19' <i>THIS FORM.</i>)	74, is required for the use of th	e Clerk of Court for the		
I. (a) PLAINTIFFS			DEFENDANTS				
GOLDMAN, KEYA			PHILADELPHIA	GAS WORKS			
(b) County of Residence o	f First Listed Plaintiff Phi CCEPT IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES	iladelphia 5)	County of Residence of First Listed Defendant Philadelphia (IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES ONLY) NOTE: IN LAND CONDEMNATION CASES, USE THE LOCATION OF THE TRACT OF LAND INVOLVED.				
(c) Attorneys (Firm Name, A	Address, and Telephone Number)		Attorneys (If Known)				
Karpf, Karpf & Cerutti, I Suite 128, Bensalem, PA							
II. BASIS OF JURISDI	CTION (Place an "X" in One B	Pox Only)	II. CITIZENSHIP OF P	RINCIPAL PARTIES			
1 U.S. Government X 3 Federal Question Plaintiff (U.S. Government Not a Party)		a Party)	(For Diversity Cases Only) P Citizen of This State	TF DEF 1 1 Incorporated <i>or</i> Prin of Business In T			
2 U.S. Government Defendant	4 Diversity (Indicate Citizenship of Parties in Item III)		Citizen of Another State	2 2 Incorporated <i>and</i> Pri of Business In A			
			Citizen or Subject of a Foreign Country	3 3 Foreign Nation	6 6		
IV. NATURE OF SUIT	(Place an "X" in One Box Only) TORT	S	FORFEITURE/PENALTY	Click here for: Nature of Suit Code Descriptions. FORFEITURE/PENALTY BANKRUPTCY OTHER STATUTES			
□ 110 Insurance □ 120 Marine □ 130 Miller Act □ 140 Negotiable Instrument □ 150 Recovery of Overpayment	315 Airplane Product	PERSONAL INJURY 365 Personal Injury - Product Liability 367 Health Care/ Pharmaceutical Personal Injury Product Liability 368 Asbestos Personal Injury Product Liability PERSONAL PROPERT 370 Other Fraud 371 Truth in Lending 380 Other Personal Property Damage 385 Property Damage 385 Property Damage Product Liability PERSONAL PROPERT 370 Other Fraud 371 Truth in Lending 380 Other Personal Property Damage 385 Property Damage 385 Property Damage 585 Property Damage Product Liability PERSONER PETITIONS Habeas Corpus: 463 Alien Detainee 510 Motions to Vacate Sentence 530 General 535 Death Penalty Other: 540 Mandamus & Other 550 Civil Rights 555 Prison Condition 560 Civil Detainee - Conditions of Confinement	710 Fair Labor Standards Act 720 Labor/Management Relations 740 Railway Labor Act 751 Family and Medical Leave Act	' 422 Appeal 28 USC 158 ' 423 Withdrawal	375 False Claims Act 376 Qui Tam (31 USC 3729(a)) 400 State Reapportionment 410 Antitrust 430 Banks and Banking 450 Commerce 460 Deportation 470 Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations 480 Consumer Credit 490 Cable/Sat TV 850 Securities/Commodities/ Exchange 890 Other Statutory Actions 891 Agricultural Acts 893 Environmental Matters 895 Freedom of Information Act 896 Arbitration 899 Administrative Procedure Act/Review or Appeal of Agency Decision 950 Constitutionality of State Statutes		
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VI. CAUSE OF ACTIO			filing (Do not cite jurisdictional statu	tes unless diversity):			
	Brief description of cause		ct ("FMLA" - 29 U.S.C. §§ 2601	et. seq.).			
VII. REQUESTED IN COMPLAINT:	CHECK IF THIS IS A UNDER RULE 23, F		DEMAND \$	ND\$ CHECK YES only if demanded in complaint: JURY DEMAND: X Yes 'No			
VIII. RELATED CASI IF ANY	(See instructions):	JDGE		DOCKET NUMBER			
DATE 1/6/2021		SIGNATURE OF ATTO	DRNEY OF RECORD				
FOR OFFICE USE ONLY	certific shifters.						

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AMOUNT

RECEIPT#

Save As...

APPLYING IFP

JUDGE

Reset

MAG. JUDGE